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Oppermann-Marsaux, Sophie Prévost and Amalia Rodríguez Somolinos  
(eds.). Le changement en français. Etudes de linguistique diachronique**

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**Bernard Combettes, Céline Guillot, Evelyne Oppermann-Marsaux, Sophie Prévost and Amalia Rodríguez Somolinos (eds.).** *Le changement en français. Etudes de linguistique diachronique.* (Sciences pour la communication 89). 2010. Bern: Peter Lang. ISBN: 978-3-0343-0079-7. 402 pp.

**Reviewed by Elisabeth Stark and Charlotte Meisner (University of Zurich)**

This volume is a collection of 21 papers presented at the conference *Diachro IV — Le français en diachronie*, Complutense University of Madrid, 22–24 October 2008, which make important contributions to the study of specific aspects of language change in French.

In their very short introduction (“Présentation”, pp.ix–x, less than two pages), the five editors mention the three main thematic axes of the volume: (i) Preclassical and Classical French in diachrony; (ii) pragmatics and textlinguistics in diachrony; and (iii) interrogative structures and cleft sentences (in diachrony). Three transversally relevant aspects for most of the contributions are additionally mentioned: grammaticalisation, periodisation, and the methodological aspect of the use of electronic corpora.

In the following, we briefly present each contribution, in alphabetical order. Six contributions of particular interest explicitly take up various aspects of historical pragmatics (Barbet, Guillot, Oppermann-Marsaux, Prévost, Rodríguez Somolinos, Schnedecker).

Flor Maria Bango de la Campa (“*Toutefois*: une vieille carcasse, un sens nouveau”, pp. 1–17) describes an alleged “grammaticalisation process” of the concessive adverb *toutefois* in Middle French out of two phonetically (and maybe etymologically) distinct, yet synonymous, forms (*toutevoie* and *toutefois*). However, the semantic evolution described (from purely temporal to adversative and concessive meaning) is not a case of grammaticalisation, but a quite common semantic change (many adverbs and prepositions indicating simultaneous events turn into concessive markers, e.g. French *alors que*).

Cécile Barbet (“Le verbe modal *devoir* en français médiéval et contemporain: hypothèses pragmatiques sur le changement sémantique”, pp. 19–41) presents a convincing and well-informed analysis (however, general literature such as Palmer 2001 is missing) of the semantic evolution of the modal verb *devoir* in French and its uses in Modern French. Using a corpus of Old and Middle French texts,

she shows that one of the central assumptions of grammaticalisation theory on modals and relevance theory, namely that modals generally develop from root to epistemic meaning, also holds for French, with important specifications as to the alethic value of *devoir*, an implication of the root meaning, and the later epistemic reading, which is considered an implicature.

Marie-José Béguelin and Virginie Conti (“Syntaxe des structures avec *avoir beau* en français préclassique et classique”, pp. 43–72) retrace in an in-depth corpus analysis (based on the database *Frantext*) the semantic and structural evolution of the modern light-verb construction *avoir beau* + V<sub>inf</sub> out of rather free syntactic elements, by comparing its occurrences in Preclassical and Classical French. Again (cf. Bango de la Campa above), it remains arguable whether we are dealing here with an instance of grammaticalisation or rather one of lexicalisation of a free verbal constituent plus adjectival modifier into a lexicalised light-verb construction with a concessive meaning.

Jacynthe Bouchard, Monique Dufresne and Fernande Dupuis (“Les changements dans les constructions à copule et l’évolution des clivées en français et en anglais médiéval”, pp. 73–91) provide, within a comparative and empirical study of the development of Old French and Old English cleft-constructions, a detailed diachronic analysis of the left periphery and the expression of focus in both languages, in a generative framework. In both languages, the rise of cleft constructions is related — though more indirectly than one might think — to the loss of the V2-typology, but the French loss of word accent and phrase initial accent and the cliticisation of subject pronouns favoured, much more than in English, the frequent use of cleft constructions as focus structures. Despite its very dense argumentation, this contribution stands out in the volume for its clear structure, integration of theoretical background, search for an explanatory diachronic approach and perfect integration into the recent international debate about information structure and the syntactic structure of the left periphery.

Daniela Capin (“Evolution d’un quantifieur-intensifieur: *petit* depuis l’ancien français jusqu’au français classique”, pp. 93–109) shows that while the adverbial modifier (*un*) *petit* (as in *petit à petit*, *un petit peu*) was extremely widespread in Old French, it has been largely replaced by (*un*) *peu* in the modern language. The contribution suffers somewhat from a rather opaque terminology and from over-applying the grammaticalisation framework to a kind of paradigmatic change (loss) inside the class of French adverbial quantifiers.

Yvonne Cazal (“*Le corps d’elle* ou *son corps*? Le tour le N de moi, toi, lui... en français préclassique: enquête sur une disparition”, pp. 111–128) examines the disappearance of the analytic genitive construction in French, as in *le corps d’elle*, which was available until the sixteenth century as a minor alternative to the synthetic possessive determiner (*son corps*). This contribution suffers, however, from

a database that is too small (two literary texts from the sixteenth century) and the absence of central scientific literature in its bibliography (like Coene and D'hulst 2003).

The programmatic contribution of Bernard Combettes and Christiane Marchello-Nizia ("La périodisation en linguistique historique: le cas du français préclassique", pp. 129–141) contains some fundamental reflections on the widespread tradition of periodisation in historical linguistics. While linguistic change is considered to be an ongoing, continuous process, periodisation presupposes recognisable, distinct and easily discernible time spans, i.e. periods. In particular, the authors focus on a short space of time, the *français préclassique* (1550–1660), whose independence as a period in the history of French is not unanimously recognised by all experts, but may be identified on the basis of the actualisation, in certain texts, of some well observable linguistic changes. Their final statement in favour of a (partial) removal of periodisation from historical linguistics in order to be more open for gradual linguistic change must be fully appreciated.

Like Yvonne Cazal, Estèle Dupuy ("Les constructions référentielles inter-définitionnelles en Moyen Français: les emplois du déterminant possessif et/ou du complément de détermination", pp. 143–162) is concerned with the expression of possession via a possessive determiner (*sa, son*). In contrast to Cazal, Dupuy examines the determination of nouns in Middle French in a semantic-referential perspective. The distribution of possessive determiners and determining complements is explained by their different discourse-pragmatic functions (cf. p. 160): while possessive determiners allow former discourse referents (*son N*) to be maintained, complements (*le N de N*) may introduce new referents. Like Cazal, Dupuy uses only three literary texts as her database. What is striking here is the abundance of clarifications and definitions in the footnotes, which might have been better placed in the main text. This abundance becomes understandable, however, as the author is mainly concerned with self-quotations and a rather idiosyncratic terminology; in fact, only three other authors are mentioned substantially in her contribution, while others are enumerated once without even a slight allusion to their position (cf. p. 147). Some bibliographical entries are not mentioned in the text, which isolates this contribution completely — even more than the one of Cazal — from current research on the topic.

Corinne Féron ("*Sans* + N: un modèle de formation d'assertifs de certitude (français médiéval et français préclassique", pp. 163–181) examines occurrences of forms like *sans faille*, *sans doute* and *sans faute* used to express certainty in Old, Middle and Preclassical French. The author shows how these frequent forms tend towards reduced syntactic flexibility, and thereby towards lexicalisation, and how their variants such as *sans nulle faille*, *sans doute de N/Inf* and *sans point de faute* disappear over time.

Catherine Fuchs (“La comparaison épistémique en français pré-classique et classique”, pp. 183–200) retraces the historical development of the “epistemic comparison” involving two adjectives as in *Marie est plus rusée qu’intelligente* (‘Mary is better described as crafty than as intelligent’). While the construction is sporadically attested during the sixteenth century, it becomes widespread during the seventeenth century, and the marking of this special type of comparison by lexical (*aussi, autant*) and syntactic means (postposition) increases. The very interesting, well-written and well-founded contribution thereby also provides evidence for the central role of Preclassical French, one of the major thematic concerns of the volume.

In his grammaticographical article, Juan Francisco García Bascañana (“A propos de certains aspects phonétiques du français préclassique. Le traitement des combinaisons vocaliques dans les grammaires françaises du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle destinées aux Espagnols”, pp. 201–215) looks at the description of vocalic digrams and potential diphthongs in two Spanish grammars of Preclassical French. The paper is somewhat isolated in the volume both because of its subject (historical phonetics/graphematics, without, however, using an up-to-date transcription system like the International Phonetic Alphabet) and the database (Spanish grammars of French).

Céline Guillot’s article (“Le démonstratif de notoriété de l’ancien français: approche textuelle”, pp. 217–233) is concerned with the so-called *démonstratif de notoriété*, a characteristic of literary medieval French (especially twelfth-/thirteenth-century), more precisely of the genre *chanson de geste*, which has disappeared nowadays. This special use of the demonstrative like in *Ces douces eves retraient en canel* (‘The sweet waters withdrew to their bed’; p. 217) is neither anaphoric nor deictic, but introduces a referentially anchored generic plural NP. The author discovers a particularly high frequency of these “notorious demonstratives” in epic and Anglo-Norman medieval texts, a functional and areal specialisation which needs further investigation.

Jukka Havu (“Le passé antérieur et la négation”, pp. 235–248) retraces the decline of negated anterior past forms such as *Il n’eut pas fait cent pas dans le parc, qu’il rencontra...* (p. 246), which do not express predicate negation but rather describe the duration of an event, from Preclassical to Modern French. While affirmative anterior past forms (just as simple past) remain vivid in Modern French literary texts, their negated counterparts start to die out after the eighteenth century, and occasional modern instances seem to be just a reminiscence of classical texts. The corpus basis of this study remains, however, unclear.

Elena Llamas Pombo (“Marques graphiques du discours rapporté. Manuscrits du *Roman de la Rose*, XVe siècle”, pp. 249–269) provides a list of (paleo)graphic and discursive strategies, like commas, points, capitalisation, *verba dicendi*, etc., to mark reported speech in different (fifteenth-century) manuscripts of the *Roman*

*de la Rose* (the original text dates back to the thirteenth century). This philological rather than linguistic contribution remains isolated in the volume and is not linked thematically to the overall subject or any other contribution.

Pierre Le Goffic's analysis ("Le développement et la place des clivées en français", pp. 271–292), not based on original empirical research, but rather discussing some existing theories and empirical results, is twofold: first, the author provides a synchronic syntactic analysis of French cleft constructions; second, he argues that the diachronic rise of these constructions is due to informational and morphosyntactic factors, above all the missing specific interrogative *wh*-element for non-human referents in subject position, which might have originally created a periphrastic interrogative construction (*C'est quoi qui produit cela?* or *Qu'est-ce qui produit cela?*) as precursor of the later clefts.

Walter de Mulder and Jesse Mortelsmans show convincingly that (linguistic) history is repetitive ("La restructuration des paradigmes des déterminants au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle: l'histoire se répète?", pp. 293–309) concerning the comparable replacement of the anaphoric markers *suprascriptus* in Vulgar Latin and *ledit* in Preclassical French by the more frequent and contextually more flexible identity marker *ipse* and the demonstrative *ce*, both having also a focalising function.

Evelyne Oppermann-Marsaux ("Injonction et interjection: l'évolution des emplois de l'impératif *allons* du moyen français jusqu'au français classique", pp. 311–324) retraces the lexicalisation of the imperative *allons* in becoming a discourse marker via pragmaticalisation (and not, as erroneously stated on page 312, via grammaticalisation) from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century.

Sophie Prévost ("Quant à X: du complément à l'introducteur de topique en passant par l'introducteur de cadre", pp. 325–343) shows that the ancient Latin expression *quantum ad* acquires three major discursive functions in French: in Old French, it occurs as a postverbal modifier or as a discursive frame marker without syntactic integration (*Quant à Madrid, il faut absolument aller au Prado*, p. 326); from the fourteenth century on, its use as a topic marker with a co-referent pronoun inside the sentence (*Quant à Paul, il est toujours d'accord avec Max*, p. 326) gains importance and becomes its main function during the Preclassical French period, while the postverbal modifier function vanishes. This very well-written and informed and also methodologically excellent study (the only one with an explicit reflection on how to constitute an adequate corpus) would have maybe gained from mentioning the very first idea of a "frame" function in the left periphery (Chafe 1976) and its application to French (Stark 1999).

Amalia Rodríguez Somolinos ("L'évolution de *apparemment* en français: la formation d'un marqueur d'attitude énonciative", pp. 345–361) identifies three different functions of *apparemment* in Modern French and describes their evolution from Old French to contemporary uses. In addition to the widespread modern

use as a sentential adverb meaning ‘apparently’, like in *Apparemment, ils s’étaient engeulés* (p. 346), it can modify adjectives, as in *apparemment anodi[n]* (p. 346) expressing ‘seemingly (but not in reality) trivial’, and, in negative contexts, such as in *sans trop apparemment devoir chercher les mots* (p. 345), it keeps its medieval sense, meaning ‘obviously’ or ‘evidently’. While the first (modern) use, allowing speakers an epistemic modalisation, emerges only in the second half of the eighteenth century, the second was available from the Middle Ages and began to rise during the seventeenth century. The third function, the original one, started to die out around the same time, and is available in Modern French only in very restricted contexts (e.g. under the scope of negation).

Catherine Schnedecker’s contribution (“Etude de l’évolution des adjectifs *damné/maudit* et *fichu/foutu* entre 1500 et 1799”, pp. 363–380) reveals some pragmatic and text-type relevant differences between four seemingly synonymous “popular” adjectives: *damné*, *maudit*, *fichu* and *foutu*. It retraces their syntactic and semantic evolution in a text corpus that is otherwise not further described.

Finally, Jaroslav Štichauer (“L’évolution de la dérivation suffixale nominale en français préclassique et classique: exemple des déverbaux en *-ment*”, pp. 381–402) is concerned with the frequent disappearance of deverbal nouns in *-ment* forms, such as *failllement* and *partement*, during the sixteenth century, and their frequent replacement by other deverbal word-formations (e.g. *faillite*, *départ*). As an example, the author then seeks to explain the extinction of *partement* in terms of Optimality Theory: the candidate *départ* rules out *partement* since the latter violates two constraints.

The overall impression of this volume is ambivalent. On the one hand, it offers a rich collection of partly fundamental research issues and excellent individual diachronic analyses (cf. Barbet; Bouchard, Dufresne and Dupuis; Fuchs; Guillot; Le Goffic; de Mulder and Mortelsmans; Prévost). In many domains, the readers thus get access to the state of the art in historical French linguistics and get to understand more deeply the importance of large electronic corpora (like *Frantext*) and the recognition of the Preclassical French period.

However, the volume suffers from the typical shortcomings of conference proceedings. Besides its short and rather uninformative introduction, the papers it contains seem to be a loose collection of anything having to do with historical French linguistics, an impression also supported by the uninspired alphabetical order they appear in. One wonders why the editors did not create thematic subgroups instead of separating, for example, Bouchard, Dufresne and Dupuis from Le Goffic, both (and the only ones, contrary to what is suggested in the introduction) dealing with French clefts. The volume contains many very punctual analyses without any visible relation to one another and very frequently not related explicitly to the international state of the art in the respective research field (cf. the



extreme case of Dupuy mentioned above). Additionally, the thematic affiliation of some contributions to the three axes evoked in the introduction remains unclear (e.g. García Bascuñana, Llamas Pombo).

But there are still two more points to mention. First, most of the papers lack an explicit and broadly recognised theoretical background or framework (exceptions: Barbet; Béguelin and Conti; Bouchard, Dufresne and Dupuis; Štichauer), which could guarantee the comparability of the results and permit an explanatory approach to the described phenomena. Second, the majority of the papers, contrary to what one might assume after having read the introduction, mostly or exclusively deal with lexical issues and lexicalisation phenomena (erroneously often addressed as grammaticalisation phenomena; in fact, very often none of the established grammaticalisation parameters of Lehmann 1985 is observable); for example, Bango de la Campa; Béguelin and Conti; Capin; Combettes and Marchello-Nizia; Féron; Prévost; Rodríguez Somolinos; Schnedecker.

Finally, the volume suffers from a quite superficial editing process. Apart from strictly idiosyncratic citation conventions and reference sections, many typos, missing glosses or translations of examples, omitted numbering of examples and so on strike the reader's eye (cf. pp. 1, 29, 108, 145, 393).

All in all, there is no doubt that some of the contributions in this volume represent important results for the history of French, also in a pragmatic perspective, but they would have gained visibility perhaps in a more thematically focused and tightly edited book.

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